

Warhol's Ultra- Violence

By William Christopher

IT BEGINS and immediately you recognize that something has changed in the Warhol School of Decorating: the settings are almost lyrical, the colors soft, muted, the rural Italian setting downright sylvan. This is Warhol country? Where is the tawdry? Where is the urban glitz, the Lower East Side, the Hollywood Hills of earlier Warhol/Morrissey pervo-kitsch epics? Warhol's collection of museum quality Art Deco and his publicized dates with one-time Hollywood star, the now rich and very social Paulette Goddard must have prettied up the mind inside that platinum head, one fears. But hold on. The Warhol-produced, Morrissey-directed *Frankenstein* has got some kinks only a



cattle surgeon could love. The Guccione / Penthouse-esque photography is setting you up for a trip ankle-deep in gore. Together with the film that follows it, *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* (the two movies were made, back to back, in a few weeks last summer in Italy) is Warhol's answer to the question, "After *Heat* and *Trash* and *Women in Revolt* how can you get much farther out?" The Answer: blood, guts and gore. Warhol is out to make violence as chic as he once did transvestites and junkies in his earlier money-makers.

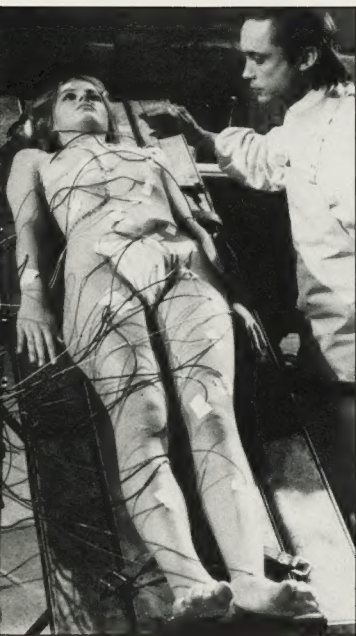
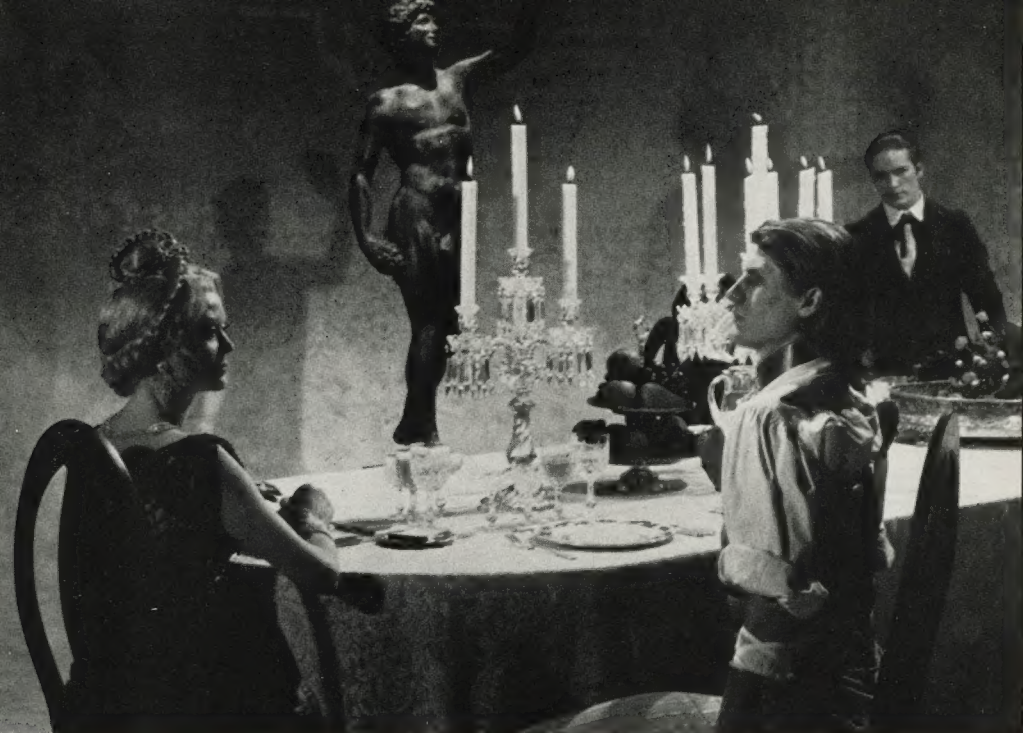
Baron Frankenstein, played by a Yugoslavian actor named Udo

Several scenes from Dracula depict the blood and gore in the Morrissey-directed film.





Andy Warhol's *Frankenstein*, directed by Paul Morrissey, features Udo Kier as the Baron von Frankenstein, Srdjan Zelenovic as his monster creation, and Warhol superstar Joe Dallesandro as a field hand caught exploring in the Baron's laboratory. Morrissey's recent *Dracula* (this page) requires the blood of virgins to appease his appetite, which *Dracula* finds scarce in this modern era of promiscuity. In the photo at left, Paul Morrissey and Joe Dallesandro sit around *Dracula's* (Udo Kier) coffin. At top of page *Dracula* is in a very weakened condition due to the fact that he mistakenly ingested the blood of a non-virgin, something which his body will not tolerate.



Kier with patent-leather hair, a serious case of chronic petulance and a middle-European accent, lives in a castle with his sister, played by the durable and beautiful Monique Van Vooren. This unlikely brother-and-sister act have sired a pair of children—remember, this is Warhol; straight sex gets the shrift you might expect—but, exquisite as they are, they're not quite up to the Baron's standards. He wants a master race that will restore the lost vigor of his enervated race. To this end, he and his assistant, played by a young Peter Lorre type who makes the original look as wholesome as Howdy Doody, are stitching up a pair of elegant monsters who will make babies, and found a tribe, all of whom will be subservient to Frankenstein.

Discarded chunks of corpses litter the Frankenstein family lab; great swollen scars traipse over the bodies of the two zombies, one of which, the male, needs a head. Specifically, he has need of a horny head, one thinking thoughts

sexy enough to get himself worked up over the female. So, armed with a giant set of hedge clippers, the Baron and his assistant are off to the local whore house. Unfortunately for one seminarian-to-be and the Baron's plans, the wrong head is secured. They want a young farm hand, played by Warhol house stud Joe Dallesandro; in his stead, they decapitate Dallesandro's buddy, about as interested in sex as Ronald Reagan is in socialism. But sexy or not, the blood spurts and the gore rises.

Down in the lab more gentle moments occur. "Now I go into her digestive parts," the Baron oozes as he rips casually into the belly of his lady zombie, pushing bloody tubes and organs aside. "To know death, Otto, you must first fuck life in the gall bladder," he coolly informs his assistant after balling the female zombie in an incision. (Is an incisional orgasm more intense than a clitoral one, Dr. Masters?) In-

(Continued on page 94)

Romy Schneider

(Continued from page 90)

when I met Zulawski and talked to him, I knew that I wanted to do his film." Romy insists that she must be able to communicate with her directors. "I want to discuss everything with them. For example, I knew I could never work with Chereau, but I'd like to do another picture with Zulawski, however difficult. One has to be completely involved in the part, and with him it's essential, as it is with Visconti." She laughs and adds, "Anyway, when you meet a director who claims, 'Of the young directors working now, one of the greatest is myself,' you either accept him or you don't!" Zulawski's ego aside, his film has certainly given a touch of quality to the current French cinema, a quality that seems to be lacking nowadays.

The gently intimate, introspective French directors do not give much scope to an actress who matches Romy's ability and ambitions. It is a good indication of the current state of French film that, of the list of directors Romy would like to work with, Roman Polanski is her first choice. "He's another one I missed. Someone called me for *Cul de Sac* and then *Repulsion*, claiming that he was Polanski. Apparently he was, but at that time, everything was going so wrong I couldn't believe it could really be him." Also on her list are the Polish director Wajda, for whom Andrej Zulawski once worked, followed by Stanley Kubrick and Bernardo Bertolucci—not a Frenchman to be seen. Orson Welles is another director Romy admires. One of her most fascinating experiences was filming *The Trial*, which Welles directed, in the gaunt, but magnificent Orsay railroad station (where Jean-Louis Barrault has now built his theatre) in Paris.

Romy Schneider has achieved the nearly impossible—the transition from teenage idol to grown-up actress while retaining the star quality. Indelibly marked by the "Sissi" episode, which has left her with the almost compulsive desire to be taken seriously, the Zulawski film confirms her as an actress to be reckoned with. □

Warhol

(Continued from page 15)

spired to some work of his own, the assistant then rummages through the entrails of the children's nannie, leaving her corpse cunningly poised over an open grating that allows her various organs to drape bloodily towards a camera below. (No one knows how many Italian cows died to make this film the butcher's showcase it is.)



Meanwhile, upstairs, Monique and Joe are having at one another in a surprisingly heterosexual interlude. (It is a pleasant task to announce that Joe Dallesandro's rear end is clearing up nicely; the acne that marred the otherwise sterling performance his rump gave in *Trash* is not nearly so obvious in *Frankenstein*. By the time we meet his much photographed cheeks in *Dracula*, the churning orbs are quite de-spotted. Hip baths in Clearasil, perhaps?) But she grows bored;

Dallesandro is, as she points out, a "low lifer."

In the lab, things aren't going so well either. The male zombie can't get it up. The mating that will create a new race is a flop. Enter Monique. She will have a crack at turning the zombie on. Instead, she gets a broken back from the zombie's overenthusiastic embraces.

The film climaxes in a festival of innards, Baron Frankenstein with his liver cantilevered from his body on a spike, waving

ominously over a stack of corpses that includes Monique, Otto the assistant, and the two zombies, while above them hangs Dallesandro from a hook. And though Dallesandro is alive as the credits signal the end of the film, he's not long for this world; the children of the Baron and Baroness are cranking him towards a massive vat of formaldehyde. Presumably, they will take up where their parents/aunt/uncle left off.

Dracula features Keir, again, as
(Continued on page 96)

Warhol

(Continued from page 94)

the blood-thirsty Transylvanian Count, and the neo-Lorre as his manservant. They are forced to leave Transylvania because the Count, who can only survive on the blood of virgins, has, unfortunately used up all of the local talent; they set off for Italy where, the manservant understands, there are throngs of virgins—pronounced “weergins” by our hero—due to the conservation efforts of the Church. Unfortunately for the digestive tract of the noble hemophile he chooses for his menu the four nubile daughters of an impoverished noble couple (played with an impenetrable accent by the late Vittorio de Sica and with elegant aplomb by New York socialite and clothing designer Maxime de la Falaise McKendry) who want to marry off one of their brood to the wealthy Count.

What the viewer of this film is in for is perhaps the most detailed examination of the process of reverse peristalsis in cinema history. He nibbles the neck of the second oldest daughter, not knowing she's been making it with Dallesandro. Result: about five minutes of anguished, scarlet vomiting into an otherwise elegant bathtub. He tries the next

youngest; she's been making it with both Dallesandro and the sister he's already sampled. More regurgitation, this time into a bidet, no doubt to give you a sense of the European style. By this time, even the most hardened viewer is likely to feel like emulating the Count's example, substituting a recent meal for the goblets of blood that pour from Kier's mouth.

The count, starving to death for lack of “weergin's blood,” now sends the two “hoors” to fetch their younger sister; their morals don't preclude their falling under the vampire's power. But Dallesandro is hip to the Count. In order to “save” the young girl, he delivers an instant, slam-bam, thank you ma'am, de-virgination to her against the wall of one of the grand salons of the decaying



Scenes from Andy Warhol's *Dracula*.



palace. And in a moment consistent with the level of taste throughout *Dracula*, the Count licks the blood off the floor beneath the scene of the coupling. Enervated by this appetizer, Dracula then takes a bite into the jugular vein of the eldest sister, also a virgin.

Now, appearance to the contrary, Dallesandro is no fool. He knows that if he doesn't do away with the Count, three of the girls will remain under his power, and one, the eldest, will be a vampire herself. Out comes the battle ax and the chase is on. Unfortunately for the viewer, however, the count is not a very willing corpse. Off comes one arm, whack! Another, whack! And Count Dracula begins to resemble a lawn sprinkler unaccountably hooked up to an artery. Off comes a leg, the other leg. At this point, the blood is flowing like Arab oil, and the Count is still not dead. Yelling a lot, however, Joe, never a very quick lad, finally remembers the old stake routine. (He may have seen a Hammer film or two.) Through the heart for more gouts of blood. And, as if that weren't enough, bring on the eldest daughter who flops herself on Dracula's finally expired body with just enough force to drive the other end of the stake through her heart.

Some critics have called these Warhol pieces allegories, finding somewhere an indictment of the violent, alienated society in which we live. This may, of course, be true. But, if it is, Charles Manson should probably be given a Guggenheim grant to produce happenings, Arthur Bremer a commission to design human beings fit for vehicular travel, and a monument should be erected to Harry Truman at Hiroshima for the invention of the cook-out. There is nothing cathartic in the Warhol/Morrissey violence; it is the celebration of a lack of love—Joe Dallesandro is put down in both films presumably because he seems to enjoy sex with a woman who is not his sister—and a love of death and pain that makes the earlier milestones of movie violence look like exercises in humanity.

Bring back the trash, Andy; at least you allowed your freaks a shot at some kind of love. □